

Book reviews

Social and Health Aspects of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Principles of Control Measures. Public Health Papers No. 65. Edited by World Health Organisation, 1977. Pp. 56. WHO, Geneva (US\$3.20; Sw.fr. 8)

This book is based on the technical discussions held during the 28th WHO Assembly in 1975. Contributors include: G. M. Antal, G. Canapira, G. Causse, G. Olsen, L. van Parijs, and R. Willcox.

The sexually transmitted diseases are a social problem as well as a health one, both in developing and developed countries. The extent of the problem and the demographic, medical, socioeconomic, and cultural factors are reviewed as are the behaviour and attitudes that affect the recrudescence and control of these diseases. The planning and organisation of health structures for control are also considered.

The facilities required for diagnosis and the methods available, the principles of treatment and of prevention are outlined. Several proposals are made for research, a chapter is devoted to health education, and another describes methods of training health personnel. There is a survey of improvements in the approach to the control of sexually transmitted diseases.

This book should be studied by all doctors, nurses, and other workers interested in this important specialty.

C. S. Nicol

Chemotherapy of Herpes Simplex Virus Infections.

Edited by J. A. S. Oxford, F. A. Drasar, and J. D. Williams, 1977. Pp. 141, 19

tables, 59 figs. Academic Press, London (£4.80)

In February 1976 the British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy held a one-day symposium on herpes simplex, and the collection of papers presented on that occasion form the basis of this book. The study of herpes has become something of a subspecialty and the enthusiastic specialist will find much to satisfy his interest here. The contents are of interest to those of several disciplines: virologists, chemists, biochemists, microbiologists, and clinicians. The book is divided into four sections: the first 'Clinical effects in man and animals' consists of three review papers, in which the clinical effects of herpetic infection are broadly presented. F. O. MacCallum and J. P. Pattison deal with human infections and include some excellent photographs, while R. Burrows and A. E. Churchill concentrate on animal pathology. It is interesting that Marek's disease, which was a considerable liability to the poultry industry in the 1960s, is now so well controlled by vaccination when one considers the indifferent results so far obtained with vaccines in human herpetic infection. The next section 'The virus and its replication' consists of four papers with an introduction by P. Wildy. These contributions are for the most part heavy going for the non-microbiologist but the interest in phosphonoacetic acid as an antiviral agent is demonstrated by B. W. Fox—who also discusses idoxuridine, Ara-C and Ara-A—and by J. Hay and his colleagues from the Institute of Virology in Glasgow. The results of studies in humans with phosphonoacetic acid are awaited but the possibility of long term toxicity cannot yet be ruled out and the presence of resistant variants in the viral population may limit

its use. The third section 'Laboratory models for the examination of new drugs' contains five papers plus an introduction by G. W. Herber. P. Collins and D. J. Bauer compare the activity of five herpes virus inhibitors *in vitro* by the plaque reduction technique and conclude that cytarabine was the most active compound tested by this criterion. A form of plaque reduction assay is also employed to measure infectivity titres in the rabbit cornea (M. G. Falcon and B. R. Jones of Moorfields Eye Hospital). Janice Hurd and T. Robinson of University College Hospital demonstrate reactivation of cutaneous herpes in mice after the administration of immunosuppressive drugs (cyclophosphamide and prednisolone). The final section consists of three papers on 'Clinical studies in man'. Herpes encephalitis is discussed by M. Longson, and Ara-A is tentatively suggested as the best drug although reduction of cerebral oedema and general nursing care are also vital. The duration of viral shedding is used to assess the effect of Ara-C in herpetic patients (B. E. Juel Jensen). The same parameter of viral shedding time together with the duration of clinical healing is employed in 'A double blind trial of idoxuridine in recurrent genital herpes'. This is the only contribution exclusively concerned with genital infection and concludes that 20% or 5% idoxuridine in DMSO are of some value in reducing the duration of infection but do not appear to influence the subsequent recurrence rate.

This is hardly a book for the general medical reader in spite of the remarks on the back cover but it is a *sine qua non* for the research worker or the clinician interested in the treatment of herpetic infection.

J. Davidson Parker